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ABSTRACT

This chapter reports on a study--referred to as the reflection study--took place within the department of foreign languages at the University of Toledo. The study sought to engage in a collaborative action research project with volunteer graduate teaching assistants. The students were to select an aspect of their teaching, determine goals in relation to the selected aspect of teaching, project plans for change, execute change, record results of executed change, and evaluate the initial goals and results thereof. The goal of the study was to examine and learn about the graduate students' process of learning. The methodology used was informal and included interviews, observations, and conversations with the participants, as well as journal entries and video and audio tape recordings of classroom teaching. The action research enabled the participants to reflect on their professional development, because it encouraged them to hypothesize and theorize from personal experience to personal sets of generalizations about change and the learning process. Appended are: French 517: Teaching Colloquium syllabus; Portfolios assignment description; Final Project Options--Teaching Colloquium; Student Questionnaire; and Sample Questions for Student Interviews. (Contains 34 references.) (Author/VWL)

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Getting to Know the Face in the Mirror: Reflection in Practice for Teachers and Teacher Educators

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Introduction

Until relatively recently, foreign language teacher education was painfully prescriptive. Pedagogical lists of what to do and how to do it were readily available; these lists, nonetheless, largely ignored the conceptual development of teachers and their voices. Since the early nineties, the field has witnessed a trend in research on teachers' voices, beliefs and practices, and their narratives (Freeman and Richards 1996; Guntermann 1993; Richards and Nunan 1990). This research has been variously labeled as collaborative research, teacher research, and action research. It is mainly qualitative or ethnographic in nature and views reality through the lenses of phenomenology, heuristics, and often feminism. Inevitably, reflection, meaning-making, and interpretation become essential processes of this research, and the representation of self (voice) and other (dialogic discourse), its main objectives.

Over the years, my experiences as a French teaching assistant, a French teacher, a foreign language acquisition specialist, a qualitative researcher, and a language program coordinator have brought me into close contact with the community of second language learners, student teachers, administrators, friends, and colleagues in my own and other fields. During this time, I have had numerous opportunities to reflect on aspects of my personal and professional self and to examine the road that I have traveled thus far.

As in a hall of mirrors where one sees infinite reflections of the self in an interplay of shade and light—at times growing in size or shrinking, at others distorted, sometimes eliciting laughter, at other times a compelling desire to turn away—the process of reflection is for many of us fraught with doubt, uncertainty, and contradiction.

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Exploring one's present and past experiences as a means of coming to know oneself is a classic phenomenological goal. However, as Brunner (1994) points out, this is not enough:

> It's true; we may come to know something about ourselves, but we may not necessarily know ourselves entirely. Simply an examination of our beginnings (and even compared with present experiences and circumstances) may not necessarily take into account the various pushes and pulls of society or the ways in which we come to see ourselves with and against different social communities, positions and relations of power . . . We may examine the mirror reflection, in other words, without examining its underside or backside. Put another way, we do not see through the looking glass, and even if we do, who we see changes continually (p. 19).

As Bakhtin (1981) has taught us, all single voices are abstracted from dialogues while we make meaning of ourselves. Dialogization occurs when a word, discourse, language, or culture becomes relativized, deprivileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language is authoritative or absolute. Dialogism assumes that language is not a neutral medium that is easily used to serve the speaker's intentions; it is invaded and inhabited at all times by the intentions of others. Appropriating language for one's own purposes and ideas, according to Bakhtin, is "a difficult and complicated process" (cited in Cazden 1989, p. 122). In the context of teacher education, if the novice teacher engages in a process of reflection, so does the teacher educator. Sometimes they exchange their reflections with each other. Then, after that, each one makes sense of what the other said and the meaning of what they themselves said in light of what the other said. Apprentice teachers learn to become authors of their own words beyond mouthing the discourse of the textbook or imitating the professor (teacher educator). And since the research process—both self reflection (monologue) and reflection with another (dialogue)—is tainted by position, knowledge, and power, it is easy to sidestep reporting conflicts between teachers and students. It is easy to bring to light new and presumably more humane and emancipatory pedagogies that question the clearly oppressive, prescriptive, and controlling nature of teacher education. The question, however, focuses on whether this liberation is real or merely old wine in new bottles.

Laying the Groundwork

The study reported on in this paper, hereafter referred to as the Reflection Study, took place within the department of Foreign Languages

at the University of Toledo. The department offers majors in French, German, and Spanish, as well as a Master's program. As the language program coordinator of the French section, I supervise approximately ten teachers including adjuncts, part-time instructors, and graduate teaching assistants. I teach the methods course, a core requirement for graduate assistants. This course is offered across languages to graduate students in French, Spanish, and German.

The potential study group consisted of all five students enrolled in the methods course (FREN 517: Teaching Colloquium) in Winter 1997 and myself. The study period extended from Winter 1997 through Fall 1997. The eventual study group consisted of one graduate student enrolled in the course and myself. The aim of the study was to engage in a collaborative action research project with volunteer graduate teaching assistants. Specifically, the volunteer graduate students collaborating in the project were to (1) select (and justify the selection of) an aspect of their teaching, (2) determine goals in relation to the selected aspect of teaching, (3) project plans for change, (4) execute change, (5) record results of executed change in plans, and (6) evaluate the initial goal(s) and results thereof. The collaborating coordinator (this author) aimed to examine and learn about the nature of the process the graduate teaching assistants underwent in initiating and carrying out an action research project. In other words, it was my goal to learn about their process of learning. The methodology adopted was primarily qualitative in nature, including long interviews, observations, and informal conversations with the participants, journals, and video and audio tapes of conversations and classroom teaching.

The roots of the study upon which this paper is based are embedded in research I conducted in 1995 (Dhawan 1997) in which I explored the beliefs, actions, and reflections of university level foreign language teaching assistants within a phenomenological framework, hereafter referred to as the Beliefs Study. The results of the Beliefs Study indicated that all the TAs "demonstrated strong beliefs in their ability to improve and develop as foreign language teachers" (p. 345). The need for approval from external sources (usually coordinator or professor) about the quality of their teaching emerged as a significant issue. Informants also demonstrated a desire for ownership of their classrooms and their teaching. There was an effort to move away from the need for feedback and reassurance from external sources, and toward a self-assessment of their teaching, suggesting increased independence in their work as foreign language teachers.

While the Beliefs Study was a good first attempt at listening to teachers' voices, I concluded that a subsequent study was needed to allow teachers more authorship—i.e., more autonomy for determining

the goals, design, and analysis of the study. For the next study—the Reflection Study—I turned to the literature on action research (Elliot 1991; Johnson 1992; Zuber-Skerritt 1996), as well as teacher research (Bailey and Nunan 1996; Freeman and Richards 1996; Kinchloe 1991, 1993; Richards and Nunan 1990). The benefits to teachers of both engaging in reflection on their own practice and researching their own classrooms are well documented in the educational literature (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995; Lambert 1989). Research that encourages change is not based on the simple transmission of knowledge but on a model of inquiry research (Beyer 1984; Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1990; Hargreaves and Fullan 1992). When teacher research is used to create meaningful opportunities for growth based on their lived experience (van Manen 1990), it is now widely considered a critical component of teacher professional development.

In exploring the roles of language teachers as researchers of their own classrooms, Johnson (1992) points to the variety in perspectives about what teacher research is. She highlights Bissex's view of the classroom as a "learning laboratory," providing opportunities for conscious reflection for the teacher. She argues, however, that "this [perspective] differs little from how many [people] would define a good teacher as a reflective practitioner" (1992, p. 215). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) define teacher research as "systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers" (p. 3). They attempt to differentiate teacher research from good teaching. In both cases, teacher research, conducted alone or in collaboration with others, involves taking notice of and attempting to understand what occurs in the classroom, gathering and recording information from their own classrooms and institutional life, and then reflecting on what was learned. As Zuber-Skerritt (1996) points out, it represents the "ways of investigating professional experience which link practice and analysis of practice into a single, productive, continuously developing sequence . . ." (p. 14). Viewing it this way, scholars have suggested that teacher involvement in research is a significant contribution to knowledge, and they believe that it is an effective way to bridge the gap between theory and practice or the gap between the work of researchers and practitioners. Freeman (1996) argues that teachers' voices must be heard, and in order to hear their voices, the field must reconceptualize and expand its concept of research and its norms for research reporting.

While there already exists a substantial body of conceptual literature on action research and teacher research in the field, reports on actual endeavors in ESL and foreign language teacher research have started to come in only recently. For example, in presenting portraits of four different composition classes, Katz (1996) demonstrates how

"knowledge is socially organized, formed and shaped by the participants in the exchange and by the context in which the exchange takes place" (p. 58). She argues that it is the teachers' interpretation of their classroom roles that is significant, not some externally defined method. Cummings' (1996) case study of twenty students in a writing class is a compelling example for our consideration. Her narrative describes the voices of the students in her classroom—the challenges they face, their hopes, and fears about their lives at large. In this course, where almost all students are near failing, she resorts to various techniques to teach them how to write, the principal one being how to relate their writing to their life. Francomano (1995) describes a teacher research project designed to motivate eighth grade Spanish students by using a Zapotec story. She spoke only Spanish in the classroom and investigated students' reactions to having Spanish-only lessons to explore the story. Her interviews indicated that students found the class more interesting and fun and that their language and communication skills increased.

The motivation to conduct the above teacher research project was fueled by a classroom concern or curiosity to explore a new technique; similarly, the idea for the Reflection Study emerged out of my reflections on my professional work. It originated from the results of the Beliefs Study. As a methods course instructor and as a language program coordinator, I wanted to introduce novice teachers eager to learn "how to teach" and "how to become good teachers" to the idea of reflection in teaching, the potential of making conscious pedagogical choices, and the notion of ownership of the process of learning to teach. As a researcher/collaborator, I wanted to gain insight into the reflective process the graduate teaching assistants underwent in conducting an action research project.

As mentioned earlier, the Reflection Study originated in a graduate level methods course I taught in the winter of 1997. Given the context of the results reported in the Beliefs Study as well as the literature on reflective teaching and teacher research, I did not want to approach the course from the prescriptive school that provided "to do" lists, i.e., how to teach writing, how to teach the subjunctive, and do's and don'ts for proficiency-oriented and communicatively-oriented foreign language teaching. Rather, I wanted to introduce students to foreign language teaching as a reflective practice, to heighten the students' awareness of their instructional practices, and to promote in them a feeling of ownership of their classes. This approach did not exclude discussions about methodology; in fact, the techniques used to teach a particular element became the starting point of our discussions in class. Students engaged in micro-teaching activities, received feedback

from their peers, reflected on the activity and the feedback, and then recorded what they had learned from the process in their teaching journals. They particularly enjoyed this activity. They often re-worked their activities and materials for future use and added them to a portfolio (see Appendix B).

On similar lines—and herein lies the heart of the Reflection Study—I introduced the idea of conducting an action research project as one of the final term paper options (see Appendix C for a description of all three options). If students chose the action research option, they were to examine a specific aspect of their teaching, such as error correction, time management, or the integration of culture in their lessons. They would explore their elected area by means of materials development, research in the library, and most importantly, by means of self-evaluation and reflection. I emphasized that their research objectives should be focused on their teaching and how it related to the course goals, the students, and their professional growth over the quarter.

While the students delved into various aspects of who they were as foreign language instructors in their classrooms, my own goal was to examine and learn about the nature of the process they underwent to initiating and carrying out an action research project. Among other things, I wanted to study their outcomes for what they implied about my own role as coordinator. I met with them as a group to describe from my perspective what participation in an action research project would entail. Since none of them had heard the term before and they were unfamiliar with the concept, I started by providing them with a definition of action research. I also gave them examples of possible topics for investigation, highlighting that virtually anything related to their teaching was a viable topic and that reflection on that topic and how they related to it as practitioners was going to be of primary concern to us. I used the following definition offered by Zuber-Skerritt to introduce the concept:

> [Action research represents] the ways of investigating professional experience which link practice and analysis of practice into a single, productive, continuously developing sequence, and which link researchers and research participants into a single community of interested colleagues. It is about the nature of the learning process, about the process of attempting to have different thoughts about similar experiences, and about the relationship between particular experiences and general ideas (1996, p. 14).

Humble Beginnings

While in the beginning all five students enrolled in the course were enthusiastic to participate, eventually, for various reasons (lack of time, pursuit of another project that was less demanding on their time, etc.), only one graduate teaching assistant, Nigel, continued with the project. Nigel was a second-year student in the Master's program in French and had already taught for one semester. Below he describes his motivation to do teacher research:

> I've always felt that I need to ensure that I am helping my students to the best of my abilities; they take the highest priority for me. It is for this reason that I jumped at the chance to do a project concerning the teaching of a foreign language; to look at who I was as a teacher; to test new ideas; to try to find out where I was going with my professional career.

Nigel wanted to conduct a study on the use of realia in his classroom and record his students' responses to its introduction in his teaching. This is the rationale he provided for his study:

> For many foreign language students, the target language seems to exist only in the classroom and in the textbook. Once they leave the room, it no longer has a purpose. However, by the use of some sort of realia, be it a song in the target language, or some authentic object, the language becomes alive and students see that the material that they are learning really exists and is used everyday.

I learned in an ethnographic interview (taken from Spradley's [1979] methodology) in which Nigel recalled various events of his language learning experience that his interest in gaining his students' perspective on the use of realia was rooted in his own past—his high school where his teacher brought slides and other realia from his travels to France into the classroom.

> French was really boring at first and I did not quite know why. I realize now that it was because it was not meaningful to me in my everyday life. Later, I took classes where the teacher would bring in flyers, slides, radio recordings, etc. from France or Québec and would give them meaning . . . All of these items helped to bring the language to life and I started to enjoy French class again.

The project had humble beginnings. However, these beginnings were full of the same natural confusion and complexity that characterizes

action research on a larger scale. The doubts Nigel had about engaging in the process were mostly rooted in anxiety related to the unknown—a common trait of someone who has never conducted research before. He was concerned about the time commitment, and also, I am persuaded, about the notion of working with his supervisor:

> Before beginning my project, I had several consultations with my professor and project advisor. In these meetings we discussed why I wanted to do a project, how and why I chose the topic I did, and what I would have to do to complete the project. I found myself having doubts about actually doing this. But later, I had a much better idea of what such a project would require me to do and how much time it would take.

While Nigel's choice of topic was of no consequence within the action research framework, I was concerned that his focus on preparing activities around realia and recording his students' reactions might distract him from the process of looking at himself. In fact, what I was aiming to have him focus on was the relation between using realia in the foreign language classroom and his evolution as a foreign language teacher. What (if any) implications did integrating realia into his lessons have on his instructional beliefs and practices? I wanted him to reflect not only about his teaching techniques and to try new ideas, but also, and more importantly, to reflect about engaging in such a process. Nigel's decision and its implications were part of the project, in fact, an integral part of the process as he moved forward with his self-defined goal.

Learning about Realia

Nigel started work on the realia project in the methods course (Winter 1997) and then continued working on it as an Independent Study (Spring 1997). During Winter 1997 (within the methods course final project option), Nigel recorded the development of his research questions regarding the use of realia and the framework for his study in a portfolio.

He recorded his work on realia in three chapters, opening with a rationale for his study. He included a description of one classroom activity without realia and contrasted it with two classroom activities using realia. He discussed the articles he had consulted for the realia project (Duquette et al. 1987; Kramsch 1993; Lutcavage 1992; Myers 1993). He also included papers on micro-teaching, journal notes regarding a videotape of his teaching, and reaction papers to the readings done in the methods course.

At the end of the winter quarter when I received Nigel's portfolio, I gave him a grade and suggestions for follow-up. Within the Independent Study in Spring 1997, Nigel first collected data via a written survey (see Appendix D) and subsequently followed up its results with student interviews (see Appendix E). He administered the survey to all 17 students in his class and conducted the follow-up interviews with three volunteers. As a second-year MA student, Nigel had no prior experience with research in second language acquisition and scant knowledge of qualitative inquiry methodology or how to form a research question. Learning about these things was part of the unfolding of the process of action research for Nigel. My weekly two to three hour long communication with Nigel revolved around realia, its definition, and the benefits and challenges associated with its use in a second language classroom. I guided him on how to start a project, get approval from the Office of Human Subjects for gathering data from his students, conduct interviews, and transcribe, code, and analyze the data.

Nigel developed the research instruments, a survey questionnaire and an open-ended interview, with my assistance and also received guidance for revising and implementing them. The questions from the survey questionnaire and interview are reproduced here for ease of reference.

Survey Questionnaire

1. How long have you studied French? (State if grade school, high school, or university)
2. What experience, if any, have you had with French outside of the classroom?
3. In the course of your French classes, what did you like and dislike about certain classes?
4. Which activities helped you the most in learning French? Which helped you the least? Why?
5. What aspects of French, if any, interest you? Which do not? Why?
6. What aspects of French do you feel are the most important to concentrate on when learning French?
7. If you could list one thing that would be the most beneficial in helping you to learn French, what would it be? Why?

Sample Questions for Student Interviews

1. What activities do you think are the most helpful to you in learning French?
2. What experience have you had with the French language outside of the classroom?
3. What do you think of the use of various materials we use in the classroom?
4. Does the use of certain materials aid in your understanding of a certain topic? Which ones? Why or why not?
5. Does the use of certain materials help to bring French language alive for you in any way? Why or why not?
6. What experience have you had with French or a foreign language before this class?
7. What kinds of activities did you do in your high school French class?

While the survey did not ask any direct questions about the potential benefits of realia in foreign language learning (to reduce the interviewer/researcher bias), questions 3, 4, 5, and 7 in general attempted to elicit such responses in an open-ended way. An examination of the survey responses indicated that ten out of seventeen students felt that the speaking skill is the most important aspect of learning French, and eleven stated that for them culture was the most interesting aspect of French. No mention of realia was made in the survey responses.

The interviews were designed to get much more specific information about a broad range of foreign language learning related issues from the students. The first interview focused on when students started their foreign language study and attempted to elicit a description of their first contact with a foreign language. The second interview included follow-up questions as well as new queries about their foreign language learning experience at the University of Toledo.

As he worked through the various layers of the research process, Nigel constantly reflected on the project: constructing a survey questionnaire, conducting interviews with the volunteer students, and synthesizing and analyzing the data gathered by making connections between what they reported and his own goals. The excerpt below is an example of such reflection.

> This [realia] was the heart of what I was trying to get to through the course of the interviews. I didn't bring this topic up during the

> interviews myself so I really feel that the information given concerning this subject was truthful . . . I believe that the information given to me was the way that the participants felt at the time of the interview . . . One activity that I was hoping would be mentioned was when I brought in French department store catalogues. I remember this activity as the best of all of the occasions when I brought realia into the classroom . . . we were discussing clothing and, even though this was something that interested a large percentage of the class, the book was very general in terms of the clothing discussed and students were becoming bored with it. The day I brought the catalogues into class, I could see some interest on the faces of some of the students. The activity involved putting the students into groups. I gave each group a catalogue or a sales flyer from a clothing store. I told them they were the parents of a set number of kids (I gave each group a certain number and a set amount of money, in francs) and told them that they had to buy clothes for their kids for going back to school. As soon as I passed out the materials, the students started looking through the ads with a lot of enthusiasm . . . I was really excited because they were showing a definite interest in the material. They were asking me questions to find out how to say different things in French. The students really seemed to be working well with each other and there was more interaction going on than I had ever seen before. During the interviews, this activity was mentioned. It was brought up by two out of three students. I was told that it was a positive activity and my hopes were met.

Below, Nigel shares a significant moment, resulting from his discovery of an emerging pattern (Lincoln and Guba 1985):

> Once I had transcribed both the interviews, I reread them several times in order to look for emerging patterns. It happened! As I was reading the old set of interviews, I saw things that I hadn't noticed before to be of any real importance. Before I go any further, I have to explain that, even though I had a goal in mind of the question on which I was trying to gain more insight—the question of realia in the classroom—I was open to other findings. As I read back through the interviews, I realized that there was an important pattern showing up; there was a connection between the students who like realia in the classroom as well as the use of French in the classroom. During the first set of interviews, the students were saying that the French classes that they had enjoyed the most, were those in which the teacher spoke mostly in French. Some of them had even referred to these classes as "fun." When I asked what they meant by fun, they would say that both the teacher and students spoke French in the classroom. I had been

> blind to this connection as it did not pertain to my initial project goal on realia. This discovery added a new dimension to my study. As I read further, I realized that these same students said that they enjoyed it when the teacher brought in authentic materials to the classroom. When asked about the use of realia, once again they said that this made the class more enjoyable. I started to believe that there was a pattern emerging. There seemed to be a definite link between the students who liked realia in the classroom and those who enjoyed speaking French in the classroom and also having the teacher speak French.

I learned about (1) Nigel's experiences with introducing realia in the classroom; (2) Nigel's experience with carrying out research in his classroom; (3) Nigel's reflections on the students' comments gained from the survey questionnaire and the interviews. Besides the story of Nigel's using realia in the classroom, there were other stories embedded in our conversations, videotaping, and discussions on classroom teaching that emerged as the research process unfolded. As we became aware of issues other than realia, we allowed them to become part of the dialogue and reflected on them, broadening the scope of our collaboration and its eventual analysis. Not all our reflections were similar. This *mise en abîme* of research questions, however, added depth and complexity to the process.

Reflections on Target Language Use

I observed that my role in this project changed constantly: coordinator, mentor, instructor, researcher, colleague. By revisiting my notes and our discussion transcripts, I noted that my research goals were being reframed. Viewed within the context of action research and reflective practice, my role as coordinator was being put into question.

For example, I observed Nigel teach in the classroom and noticed, in particular, his liberal use of English. Given my own belief in using the target language as the medium of instruction, I mulled over how to raise the issue with him. I was eager to protect his dignity while encouraging him to reflect on the issues related to target language use and to encourage change in his practice without threatening him. Aware of the power dynamic between Nigel and myself, I weighed the importance of Nigel reaching this awareness himself versus my calling his attention to areas that I wanted him to consider. I weighed his need for guidance versus autonomous decision making; I often acted intuitively. As I was to learn later, Nigel was already aware of his use of English. I learned to recognize that although individuals may have a certain belief about how they would like to teach, they may not know

how to translate that belief into practice; drawing their attention to something of which they are already conscious might at best be presumptuous if not destructive.

> All the sources of information—my own beliefs, my coordinator's suggestion, as well as my students input—pointed in one direction: the use of the target language in the classroom was significantly related to a positive language learning experience. Yet, I was aware of using a considerable amount of English in the classroom.
>
> I believe that in order for my students to attain proficiency in French, they must be exposed to it as much as possible. This, however, does not mean that the target language should be used exclusively. The teacher should try different activities to make the lesson more comprehensible to the often bewildered looking students. If however, several attempts at trying to get the students to understand fail, the teacher should use the native language. Even though use of the target language is necessary for second language learning, its use is a block to learning instead of a help if the students are completely lost during an activity.

Nigel and I did not agree on some of the issues surrounding target language use. I would have preferred him to try to find alternatives to reverting to English in the classroom. Nigel, however, stood up for himself and his beliefs. It was clear that he had given thought to the question and had taken a stand on it. Admittedly, not everyone would agree with his decision or his reasoning. Regardless of the debate over target language use, however, few could argue with the fact that within the broader picture, this represented a step in the reflective inquiry process for Nigel—a step in the direction of gaining ownership of his instructional practice.

Nigel's Videotaping: Another Mirror

Another step in the process of reflection was the videotaping of his classes and the subsequent examination and analysis of the lessons. There are a couple of interesting threads to follow here. First, Nigel's reaction to using this tool for obtaining feedback about his students:

> As the quarter went on, the readings became more relevant. Throughout the quarter, I was given more and more instruction on how to complete the project. I was told about the different methods of collecting data and was given articles to read about all of them. Among these different methods was the process of video and audio taping of my French class. This method gave me the opportunity to see my

> different teaching methods in action. For example, when I videotaped an activity using realia in the classroom, I was able to get an outsider's view of how things went. I could see how the students reacted, especially since it is impossible for me to catch all of the reactions of the students while I am teaching. Watching these videos afterward was a real eye opener. There were times when I thought that students felt one way about something when, in fact, after watching the video, it seems that they reacted completely different to what I had thought. For example, I could see more easily when students seemed to be getting bored with an activity.

I had suggested that Nigel videotape himself, assuming that doing so would allow him see himself his teaching and provide a springboard for new ideas for classroom practice. Nigel took a slightly different stance on the use of this tool for reviewing himself in action:

> It is in the classroom that my views of teaching are put to the test. Yet, when I'm teaching, it's impossible to get a whole picture of how things are going. By videotaping my classes, I am able to see myself through the eyes of someone else, perhaps as my students see me. I am often afraid of watching these videos and am usually reluctant to play them, especially when someone else is watching them with me. I think the reason for this is that what I did during these classes is frozen in stone and cannot be changed. I like getting criticism about my teaching, so this reluctance bothers me. I hope that with increased viewing of these videos, I will become less apprehensive about seeing them. By not dwelling on the feeling that I can't change what was done in these classes, and by treating the viewing of the tapes as a way of improving future classes, I hope that I will be able to change my feelings about watching these videos. This process could help me to make changes in my teaching that will in turn, make my class more enjoyable for the students and make their time in class more beneficial to them.

Reflections: Collaboration across Power Lines

Nigel's and my agendas were quite different. As a graduate teaching assistant, Nigel was student-centered and was focused on improving his instructional practice. He felt that he needed to find ways to help sustain the motivation of his seemingly uninterested students. I functioned on two levels: at one level, for my own purposes, and at the other, with Nigel in mind. As a coordinator, a foreign language acquisition specialist, and a researcher, my motivation was to better understand how Nigel worked, to discuss with him his beliefs about foreign language teaching, to learn from our discussions about my

own perspective as a professional, and to frame those perspectives in the light of collaboratively constructed knowledge. However, as Nigel's language program coordinator, as his methods course instructor, and as a professor engaged in research with a student, the situation was further complicated by the power I wielded over him. I increasingly realized the implications of Brunner's words; that any adequate program of teacher education or teacher research must begin with tough questions arising out of "a raced, classed, and gendered, self-critical, self-conscious awareness" (1994, p. 111) and must always include questions about knowledge, power, voices, and position.

I had observed Nigel teach and had written observation reports for him. In them, I had given him practical suggestions for improving some of his teaching techniques. He knew, albeit subconsciously, my biases and preferences. While I hoped that Nigel would assert his opinions and views and would engage me and challenge me, I also knew that that desire was embedded in some ill-defined, idealistic notion of a healthy tension of forces. In reality, I was perceived as the leader and in fact I did control the reins to a large extent. I was able to acknowledge this to myself quickly enough, but I doubt that the drive to push him in a certain direction ever left me. I knew I needed to let Nigel decide his own course of action for the project. Yet I was concerned that this interest might lead him away from looking at himself.

I was also distressed by the thought that what I had hoped was going to be an opportunity for dialogic inquiry for us might evolve into a lecture (if I were to tell Nigel what to do) that would haunt me for the duration of the study. The titles "professor" and "Dr." reinforced the assumption of a certain knowledge base and skills, and both differentiated and distanced me from Nigel. I was uncertain about how long the research would last and whether Nigel would be able to play catch-up before being overwhelmed by the desire to give up. I realized that in order to rationalize, in my mind, the pursuit of our distinct agendas, I needed to be patient and less selfish and to modify my own research agenda in order to acknowledge and validate his. I needed to slow down and get in sync with Nigel and fine-tune my expectations. One of the most challenging tasks for me was to suspend judgment about him. While we were both liable to judge the other, it was unlikely that I would receive evaluative comments from Nigel.

Ambiguity, Uncertainty, Complexity: More Reflections

Despite its benefits, as Burton (1997) points out, the idea of engaging in teacher inquiry can be initially intimidating. One may encounter initial resistance (Bell 1997) that can be tracked on various levels: the

inclination of many teachers to be student-focused, such that examining their own practice may be perceived as less valuable to their student-focused objectives; the inclination to perceive research as something graduate students and professors do whose product is irrelevant to their daily classroom needs; practical concerns for time and energy output versus the benefits. As Nigel reflected in his journal:

> In the methods course . . . I was surrounded by other students who were considering doing such a project themselves. I had never done anything like this before and it was scary at times not knowing what to really expect.

On another occasion, he wrote:

> The new school year had started and we had not had a meeting since the beginning of the summer. During the summer, I admit that there were times when I thought this project would never be finished. I had never worked on a project of this type or size before. It was really a bit scary at times. Being the only student doing this project made me feel like I was the only one going through some of this for the first time. But, I kept going and things seemed to finally be taking shape.

Despite the training and preparation, Nigel's account indicated that at times he found his role challenging. This was partly due to his lack of experience and confidence in managing a research project. Over the course of the year, however, engaging in such a project proved both fruitful and relevant.

Looking Inward

The following excerpt from Nigel needs little introduction.

> Trying to look deep inside of you is something that requires a lot of time, effort, openness, and honesty. I found this to be one of the hardest things I have ever done. I don't just mean in terms of work load; the basic understanding of what I am doing can become a difficult task in itself. As I was doing this study, the path would become very blurred at times making it difficult to know where to turn next. There were times when I was doing so many different things at once, that everything would become muddled and I couldn't tell one part of the study from another. As I became more involved with my project on realia, I started to focus all my attention on it and was drifting further and further away from my real objective, that of self-evaluation. Now that the realia project is over, I am getting back on track as to what I am actually doing

> and what my goal is. The goal of this study is what has been the hardest thing to keep in mind. As I went through each step, I became centered on that part of the study and would have a hard time climbing out of it and centering back on the main goal. This did, however, force me to try to concentrate on what I was actually doing.

Working with Nigel on this project helped me question some of the assumptions I made about my roles as supervisor and colleague. In building our rapport, I wanted to break down some of the dynamics involved in a hierarchically defined relationship of coordinator-TA. Wagner (1997) proposes a framework for "reconsidering researcher-practitioner cooperation." First, he describes data-extraction agreements where "the researcher is clearly the agent of inquiry, the person who reports knowledge and who constructs the knowledge to be reported. Practitioners are the people whose work is described and whose work is the focus of analysis and reform" (p. 15). In clinical partnerships, the second form of cooperation, again "the researcher is clearly the agent of inquiry. But practitioners can also engage in inquiry, at least by assisting their research colleagues, and attention is given by both to the process of researcher-practitioner consultation in itself" (ibid.). The third type of cooperative research is characterized by Wagner as a "co-learning agreement" (ibid.). As he points out, "many researchers thank their subjects for contributing to the researcher's understanding of the subject world, but these affirmations rarely extend to noting new knowledge that engagement with subjects has contributed to how researchers understand their own world" (p. 16). Wagner states that in co-learning agreements, "the division of labor between researchers and practitioners becomes much more ambiguous, as both researchers and practitioners are regarded as agents of inquiry and as objects of inquiry" (ibid.). He admits however, that "while efforts are made by both practitioners and researchers to develop a shared research enterprise, these efforts can themselves reveal understandable differences of perspective, some of which may be attributed to institutional positions or social location" (ibid.). This is borne out in Nigel's perspective on our rapport as collaborators, as well as in the larger context of our respective institutional positions:

> Being involved in a study like this automatically put me in a close working relationship with my coordinator. I admit that the difference in position between my coordinator and myself made me think that working on this project was harder than if I had worked on it with a peer, especially since a grade was involved. However, my view of this relationship is completely different today. I now also see my coordinator as a partner in this project and not just as the overseer and advisor.

> At first, my coordinator was also my teacher for the methods course. This label automatically overrides all other labels. However, when I started to work on the study beyond the classroom setting and in close collaboration with my coordinator, the label of teacher eventually started to fade and I started to see my coordinator as a partner. This surprised me as I did not believe that this was possible. As this is a new experience for me, I really didn't know what to expect. I believe that it was the work that this project entailed that allowed me to make this transition in my relationship with my coordinator.

Our professor-researcher/teacher-researcher rapport fell somewhere along the continuum between the clinical partnership and the co-learning agreement. Our rapport was clinical in that as the researcher, I initiated the inquiry process, offered suggestions for reading, and facilitated the data collection process. As Wagner suggests, this is partly a consequence of my institutional position and my job responsibilities. It was a co-learning agreement in that not only did I learn something about Nigel's process of self-evaluation, reflection on action (Schön 1983), and change in his practices, I also became more aware of what I am like as a language program coordinator and how my values influence or do not influence my colleagues. I impose my beliefs about language learning and teaching on the teachers working with me, all the while aware that their beliefs may differ from mine on various levels. In the specific context of this study, I learned how my vision of "empowering" Nigel (Kinchloe 1991) as a foreign language teacher, whereby Nigel would show more independence in the reflection, evaluation, and modification processes of his teaching, did not exactly match Nigel's goals. Nigel was extremely motivated to learn; what he learned, driven by his self-motivation, superseded my vision of the process.

The research itself is partly clinical in that my beliefs about the language learning and teaching process are embedded in the research design and data collection. The questions I asked Nigel and the readings I assigned him were purposefully chosen. The follow-up questions I asked Nigel directed him to make connections I wanted him to make. Prescription, albeit veiled, was present. However, it was only natural that I function from my own world view. It was also important that I fulfill my responsibilities as coordinator and researcher since this was Nigel's first experience of research. It was also partly a co-learning agreement, in that Nigel's beliefs were also embedded in the choice of his topic, data collection, and analysis process.

Looking Out

Nigel's task of synthesizing the reflections he had over the course of a year and relating them to himself provided some closure and also more openings:

> As I look at myself the way I was yesterday and the way I am today, I see that the greatest difference is in the way I look at things. It's my beliefs that have changed. My beliefs form the basis for all my decisions and actions. I was as concerned with my teaching when I started teaching two years ago as I am today. This has not changed. I feel that I have a better idea today about what I am doing than I did two years ago; however, I realize that I still don't know enough. I will continue to look at myself and at my instruction for as long as I am a teacher. The process of this study has allowed me to see how I evolve as a teacher and how I change my teaching as a result of what I learn.
>
> In addition, I now know what a research project of this kind entails. I learned a great deal about working with someone in a research setting and about preparing a conference presentation. I believe that the researcher has to be deeply interested in the project for it to be successful. It makes the study worth the effort. Given the chance to do another study of interest to me, I would do it.

Given the continuous and cyclical nature of action research, this project can only open new avenues for reflection. For the novice teacher, the concern may be one of retaining momentum once the study is technically over—momentum for continuing the research, merging it with the daily activity of lesson planning, and revising instructional practice based on the insights gained. The objective is to change the internal drive of the professional enterprise by engaging in the habitual act of reflection. For the methods course instructor, the challenge is to facilitate teachers' transition while walking the tightrope between prescriptive and reflexive teaching. The foreign language coordinator continues to strike a fine balance between the identities of coach, guide, facilitator, mentor, researcher, pedagogical expert, and at times, collaborator. As for myself, I intend to create a follow-up course to the methods course whose objectives will center on teacher research, action research, reflective teaching, and teachers as leaders. I now regularly introduce the concept of action research in my annual fall teaching orientation. Further, looking into the mirror has made possible visions that were hidden thus far. The research would have had a different flavor had more teaching assistants been involved in the collaboration.

What one sees in the mirror of professional self-reflection depends on one's stance. The experience is personal and individual and there are no precise measures available for evaluating what and how much was gained and changed. Still, action research encourages hypothesizing and theorizing from personal experience to personal sets of generalizations about change and the learning process. Since reflection and self-evaluation form the core of action research, I find particularly apt the words of Dogen Kigen (1200–1253), a Japanese Zen master, philosopher, poet, painter, and founder of the Soto Zen school in Japan:

> When we first seek the truth, we think we are far from it. When we discover that the truth is already in us, we are all at once our original self.

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APPENDIX A

French 517: TEACHING COLLOQUIUM
Winter 1997, MW 2:00-3:30, 5260 University Hall

Dr. Sangeeta Dhawan
Office: 5210A University Hall
Office Hours: Mon., 3:45-5:00; Wed., 12:30-1:45 and by appt.
Phone: 530-2162 / E-mail: sdhawan@uoft02.utoledo.edu

Objectives and Description

The course will provide a forum for critical reading and discussion related to issues of theory, research and pedagogy of foreign language. It will provide a frame for gaining an in-depth understanding of what it takes to become a principled and reflective teacher of foreign language. It will offer information, resources and experiences for facilitating the beginning of teachers' professional development. By the end of the semester the conscientious student will:

- show familiarity with the principal characteristics of current theories of second language acquisition;
- show familiarity with the principal issues currently facing foreign language teachers;
- describe, evaluate and critically examine the various methodologies and approaches to foreign language teaching;
- define terms frequently used in foreign language teaching and research;
- explore and evaluate self-teaching (through peer observation, journals, portfolio, videotaping)
- find and use resources available to foreign language teachers (journals, realia, professional organizations);
- develop course, unit and lesson plans for an elementary or intermediate level language course addressing the four skills, French and francophone culture, and literature;
- use, create and evaluate measures of learning (tests, portfolios);

Classroom activities and lesson structure will include discussion, lecture, presentation, group and pair work, and student presentations. Preparation for class and attendance are mandatory. Absences will be reflected in final grades, and no late work will be accepted except in case of an emergency (formal documentation required).

Course Evaluation Components

Class participation and reaction papers	30%
Four class observations (written & oral)	10%
Micro-teaching; Self-Assessment	10%
Portfolio (Journal, micro-teaching, self-assessment, observations)	25%
Final Project	25%

Class Participation and Reaction Papers (30%)

Students are expected to arrive in class having already read the assignments and completed the reaction papers. For each week of the course you will be responsible for writing a reaction paper (1-2 pages each). The reaction papers are an opportunity for you to use writing as a means of relating to and learning about what you are reading. Each reaction paper is due prior to our scheduled class discussion and should be used to respond to questions assigned to each set of readings. Besides responding to the assigned questions, you are welcome to include your reactions, criticisms, praises, etc... to the issues you are reading about. Do not merely summarize the articles! If you have questions about the readings, write them down. All reaction papers must be typed. I will respond to your reaction papers and grade them in terms of the extent to which you have attempted to discuss and analyze the readings assigned in the course. In addition to the readings, do the following:

- Your favorite quote (one or two sentences or short passage).
- One bibliographic source mentioned by the author that you would most like to follow up on.
- These will form the basis for discussion or other activities in class; they will not be collected.

Four Class Observations (10%)

Obtain permission from the instructor to attend the class. Do not attend on a test day, review or video day. You should avoid observing a class for which you are currently enrolled or that of another student enrolled in this course. At least one of these observations should be of a language class other than French. In general, the observations should include the lesson plan and a detailed account of your experience as a participant observer with descriptions of student and teacher behaviors, and salient points of your post-observation discussion with the course instructor.

20 minute observation exercise	Due 1/13
Beginning level of language you teach	Due 2/03
Beginning level of language other than the one you teach	Due 2/24
Intermediate level of language other than the one you teach	Due 3/10

Micro-teaching/Self-Assessment (10%)

Plan an activity for each skill and demonstrate it in class. The time you get to demonstrate your activity (micro-teach) will depend on the class enrollment and time constraints. Your classmates will role play the student. After demonstration in class, revise and implement the activity in one of your classes. Write a self-assessment of your design and implementation to include in your portfolio. Video taping your class is highly recommended.

Portfolio and Final Project (25%; 25%)

Four observations, micro-teaching, self-assessment, analysis of video (wherever applicable), journal entries on teaching and materials read will form the basis for the portfolio. Students may work alone or in pairs to create a final project. Details on all these requirements will follow.

Texts: Coursepack available in the reserve reading room in Carlson Library.

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APPENDIX B

PORTFOLIOS

25% of your final grade in this course will be based on a portfolio you prepare over the course of the quarter. Please read the attached excerpt from Zena T. Moore's chapter in *Teaching, Testing, Assessment: Making the Connection* (Charles Hancock, Ed.). Portfolios are valuable to me as "a collection of evidence . . . to monito . . . growth." Given the goals listed in the syllabus of this course, as well as the personal goals and expectations you have listed for yourselves, it should be possible to imagine the likely contents of a portfolio.

As noted in the syllabus, your portfolio may include representative examples of written work done for class, a videotape of your teaching, materials developed for current or future instructional use, "thought" papers or journal entries in which you reflect on readings or experiences, a written assessment of your teaching composed by an observer with a reaction statement written by you, etc. There must be at least six to seven items in the portfolio by quarter's end. Remember that you are not attempting merely to collect your "best" work, but rather to provide evidence of growth and reflection on your growth. The inclusion of brief statements explaining why you decided to include an item or items is especially appreciated. Indeed, the portfolio grade will reflect the quality of decision you have made in assembling the portfolio, as well as adherence to these guidelines. It would be wise to include your initial goal statement.

If the portfolio is physically well-presented, you may find it useful in the future as part of a larger teaching portfolio presented during job searches.

You may consult with me concerning the contents and presentation of your portfolio at any time during the quarter.

APPENDIX C

Final Project Options—Teaching Colloquium
(French/Spanish 517)

Winter 1997 S. Dhawan

You have a number of options for the final project in this course. If you choose to work in a group or with another individual, it is recommended that you include no more than three people in your group. Those participating in group projects will receive one grade for the project as a whole and one grade for the individual contribution, assuming a means is provided for me to determine who contributed what.

1. Study several journal articles devoted to topics in second or foreign language acquisition (SSLA, MLJ, FLannals, French Review, Language Learning, ADFL Bulletin, Canadian Modern Language Review [CMLR], etc.) Choose a journal for which you would like to write an article; then locate and study the Author's Guidelines (pay particular attention to citation form, length; and so on., but also to the general tenor of articles published in the journal). Pick a topic introduced in the course (schema theory, content-based instruction, etc.), conduct UT-MOST, OHIOLINK and ERIC searches, and write an article in which you summarize the major findings of work done in the area so far or a plan for further research of the topic. Your article should probably be about 20 pages long when typed and double-spaced, although it may be slightly longer or shorter depending on the journal you have chosen.

2. Design a beginning or intermediate language sequence for either high school (French 1 and 2 or French 3 and 4) or college (French 111 and 112 or French 301 and 302). You must include the following elements:

a. an introduction in which you present the theoretical basis for the curriculum: which SLA/FLA theories and pedagogical approaches are informing the shape of your courses?
b. a syllabus, including goal and objective statements.
c. sample materials (actual and/or description).
d. one major exam and one quiz for each course.
e. 2 classroom activities each in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. At least one must involve the introduction of grammatical structures; at least one must involve the introduction of vocabulary; at least one must involve work on pronunciation or prosodic features.

APPENDIX D

Student Questionnaire

1. How long have you studied French? (State if grade school, high school, or university)

_____

_____

2. What experience, if any, have you had with French outside of the classroom?

_____

_____

3. In the course of your French classes, what did you like and dislike about certain classes?

_____

_____

4. Which activities helped you the most in learning French? Which helped you the least? Why?

_____

_____

5. What aspects of French, if any, interest you? Which do not? Why?

_____

_____

6. What aspects of French do you feel are the most important to concentrate on when learning French?

_____

_____

7. If you could list one thing that would be the most beneficial in helping you to learn French, what would it be? Why?

_____

_____

APPENDIX E

Sample Questions for Student Interviews

1. What activities do you think are the most helpful to you in learning French?
2. What experience have you had with the French language outside of the classroom?
3. What do you think of the use of various materials we use in the classroom?
4. Does the use of certain materials aid in your understanding of a certain topic? Which ones? Why or why not?
5. Does the use of certain materials help to bring French language alive for you in any way? Why or why not?
6. What experience have you had with French or a foreign language before this class?
7. What kinds of activities did you do in your high school French class?

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